

Working Draft

The Case for Indic Traditions in the Academy

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OUTLINE

While my previous Sulekha column explained neocolonialism, the cultural condition of many elitist Indians, and its adverse impact upon the Indian Classics, it did not give a vision as to why the Indian Classics are worth preserving and rediscovering.¹ This essay puts in context the potential significance of these classics for the contemporary world at large.

Furthermore, while the previous essay focused on the faults of external elements, i.e. the neocolonialists, this essay faults those who claim to speak for these traditions.

The major sections are as follows:

- I. The Second Renaissance
- II. How Indic Traditions Could Enrich Mainstream Education
- III. Need for Universality *and* Authenticity
- IV. Need for Constructive *and* Historical Scholarship
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I. The Second Renaissance

The first Renaissance² was based on Europe's rediscovery and assimilation of ancient Greek Classics over the past few centuries. This has led to a quantum leap in the outer realm of science, technology and social development. It was one of the most important events in human history, and it changed the world forever. However, this renaissance has done very little to upgrade the quality of the inner human being.

Human character (as determined by the gunas) and the resulting value systems have remained largely unchanged. Modern improvements to ethics and morality (assuming we grant these improvement as being real) have been the result of external imposition of law and not the result of an inner revolution of the human being in any fundamental way.

Thus the tendencies of greed, aggression, ego inflation, materialistic cravings and obsessions, fear of death and aging, are amongst basic human qualities that remain unaffected despite such major revolutions in the outer realm.

Robert Thurman, in his book, *Inner Revolution*, proposes that humanity is in dire need of a *Second Renaissance*, and that this renaissance would be based on the assimilation of the Indian Classics. The rest of this paper explains the Foundation's vision on how Indic Traditions could help to achieve that goal.

II. How Indic Traditions Could Enrich Mainstream Education

Globalizing the Classics:

Just as the Greek Classics are respected in mainstream higher education today, as being the very foundations of modernity — the realm of outer accomplishments - a comparable repositioning of India's Classics is very important to bring about an inner revolution. Eventually, there should be a multi-cultural globalization of the Classics curriculum that would include Indian, Chinese, Greek, Persian, and other works of the great thinkers of humankind.

Our Foundation's interest centers around Indian Classics because these are the most voluminous and comprehensive classical works of all, they are still *living* in India in a continuous civilization, and they are capable of bringing enormous practical benefits today.

Other civilizations' classics should also be introduced via partnerships with other organizations that specialize in them.

Indian Psychology:

Academic curricula for the study of psychology are based too much on Freudian theories and other materialistic models of the human being. The vast literature and validation on Patanjali's Yoga, Buddhist Madhyamika, Abhinavagupta and Tantric systems, among others, needs to be introduced into the psychology departments as mainstream subjects, and yet without losing their authenticity or erasing the sources.

This would benefit mental health disciplines, beyond the level that is recently being achieved, especially in their use as preventive technologies.

While it is common to re-map the Indic psychological systems into Abrahamic religious symbolism and beliefs, and/or into new Western science, this dislocation results in a loss of authenticity, separation of practices from their corresponding epistemologies, and diminishment of the future development of these knowledge systems from the native cultures where they are alive. While harvesting the fruits of Indic thought, the West has ignored nurturing the roots, and this has jeopardized future harvests.

There is a vast difference between bootlegged Indic knowledge transfers to the West and transfers that openly respect the source and create an on-going dialog.

Geriatrics:

One of my first culture shocks upon arriving in USA in 1971, was the way older Americans are so disenfranchised and, consequently, prone to senility.

While outer technology continues to increase the lifespan, little has been done to improve the quality of life of the aged. Rates of senility are considerably higher in USA than in India. In fact, one might say that Americans have a two ashram social system (in contrast to the four ashrams of Indic theory). These two stages of American life are juvenile and senile.

Fear of death is so deeply embedded in Americans that it causes fear of aging. Americans go to extremes to prevent or at least delay aging and its social effects — plastic surgery, hair dying, breast implants, living

in the fast lane or at least pretending to, and forcing oneself into social excesses and artificial behavior just to be seem as youthful.

This is the result of the de-legitimization of the aged. Rather than aging being seen as a respectable, natural and normal process, with its own dharmas and processes, there is an obsession to pretend youthfulness for as long as one can play that game. This obsession represents the juvenile stage. The shadow side of the juveniles is this fear of what lies ahead when the game is no longer viable and when he/she must declare and acknowledge aging.

Senility is the result of social alienation and abandonment by the juvenile culture. Conversely, juvenile tendencies are exacerbated by the obsessive denial of aging for as long as possible, largely because of the fear of senility.

The extended life span that is being achieved with insufficient progress in the mental health of the aged, will result in a catastrophe in American mental health. This would not be cured with more golf courses and sail boats.

Indic traditions have a lot of offer in the geriatrics field.

Linguistics:

The Cambridge Dictionary of Etymology and other similar works locate the historical origins of most words in European languages, even when it seems rather clear that Sanskrit was the most likely source. Furthermore, it is a rare course in the academy today in which Pannini, Patanjali, Bhartrrahi or other pioneering Indian linguists and grammarians are given any importance at all.

Postmodernism and Literary Theories:

My suspicions about Indian equivalents to postmodern deconstruction were confirmed when I read Harold Coward's book, Derrida and Indian Philosophy. Ever since, I have discovered profound direct influences and/or parallels between Indic thought and Jung, Tielhard de Chardin, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Eliade, William James, Schopenhauer, the Transcendentalists, and many others. The cumulative impact of thinkers such as these has been the West's intellectual movement from modernism by postmodernism.

Not only would the explicit introduction of Indic thought into the academic curriculum globalize this arena beyond the enclave of Western thought, but more importantly, it would bring many new ways of dealing with similar issues. It would also bring the civilizations into dialog as peers, to mutual benefit.

Recently, I have started to read a few works that directly address Sanskrit literary and critical theories in comparison with Western postmodernism.³

Influence on English Literature:

While TS Eliot, the Beats, Huxley and the Perennialists, are among many important authors of contemporary Western literature who were deeply influenced by Indic thought, one rarely finds these influences given importance in school or college curricula, if mentioned at all. This is at variance with the pedagogy of examining the influences that operated upon a writer in shaping his/her works.

While many Indians today are at the forefront of English Literature, most tend to be dislocated from Indian Classics and, in fact, unwittingly serve as substitutes for Kiplings and other Eurocentric authors as suppliers of the caste, cows and curry theories of India. Their knowledge of India is often at the superficial level of bhangra and Bollywood, samosas and lassi.

Aesthetics:

Natya Shastra, and its commentaries by Abhinavagupta and others, would greatly expand the study of aesthetics. Every department of arts could benefit from this expansion.

Political Theory:

College courses hardly ever include classical Indian political models alongside Greek and other Western systems. In rare cases when this is done, it is usually in a patronizing or denigrating tone.

Consider, for example: The separation of brahmin and kshatriya job descriptions was a sort of separation of church and state — a very progressive idea today. It prevented the ruler from also being the spiritual head, and hence there could not be a theocracy. (Appointments based on birth later became a degeneration of this system of firewalls.) Buddhist sanghas had socio-political structures of considerable sophistication, including elected representatives. The village panchayats were systems of local governance that deserve serious study. This localized governance maintained water harvesting systems, sacred groves and other societal assets.

The Natural Law Party in the US, led by an eminent physicist, Dr. John Hagelin, is regarded as being even more liberal than Ralph Nader's party. Yet, what is seldom acknowledged is that NLP openly draws its worldview and political thought from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's interpretation of Vedas. How does one reconcile the Vedas' contemporary portrayal as being right wing with the fact that the many liberal political ideas today are coming from that classical tradition?

Social Theories:

Lack of proper interpretation of classical social theories of India, combined with the tendency to freeze Indian thought (as opposed to constructive theology and constructive sociology), has resulted in depictions of the Evil Brahmin Conspiracy to oppress the poor, women and minorities. It has resulted in claiming *causal* links between classical Indian traditions and contemporary socio-political problems of India — stereotyped as pollution, population, poverty, caste, dowry, sati, cows, greed, backwardness, superstitions, snakes, mosquitoes, and so forth.

This has become fodder for human rights activism, often sponsored by foreign funding sources (both religious and secular), using Indian NGOs as proxies for remote intervention of India's social landscape.

An authentic repositioning of social theories based on the classical Indian experience, would not only remove these Eurocentric superstitions held by too many Westerners and Westernized Indians today, but could also provide inputs for use by humanity at large. The constructive theologies by Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, Maharishi, Swadhyaya, Dalai Lama, are some recent examples of the potential for new ideas from non Western sources.

Eco-Vegetarianism:

Vandana Shiva and other non Westerners led the movements to bring a whole new appreciation for ecology into the West. Yet, today the ecology movement is dislocated from Indic roots and its history is hardly known. One wonders: what further practices and theories might be possible under the active involvement of both Indian and Western cultures, and not just via a few intermediaries brokering the knowledge transfer?

Feminism:

The Hindu Goddess, in her many forms, has been adopted by many American women in their own discovery of the Divine as feminine.

Yet, there is a recent movement to depict the Hindu Goddess as a male chauvinistic scheme to marginalize women, while at the same time, her symbolism and positive ideas are appropriated and assigned to Greek goddesses, using the archetype theory that all such ideas independently exist in all cultures.

Meanwhile, one of the hottest tickets to a PhD or tenure today is via a study of how Indian traditions are the cause of women's problems in India. By the way, these studies usually ignore comparative statistics of social problems, as a percentage of population, with other poor but Christian countries, or with USA.⁴

Anthropology:

While the anthropological study of poor villagers of India is in vogue, using asymmetrical methods in which they are otherized as native informants, the reverse is never done: an outsider view of American life and culture seen as exotic, peculiar, strange, superstitious, etc.

Just as a psychoanalyst gives the client an insight that is not available to the client himself/herself, so also anthropology can offer new insights into a culture. This is a service that the non West should start to provide to the West. In the process, it would help move intercultural dialogs to a higher plane between peers.

History of Ideas:

Eurocentric claims that all science, technology and progress was driven by Europeans have been challenged to some extent by the rediscovery of China's contributions, documented by Joseph Needham, and also by similar works concerning Arab/Islamic contributions. However, India's major role in the history of ideas remains largely ignored in the education system.

These Indic contributions span the outer realms of technologies of many kinds, inner sciences (adhyatma-vidya), and the inner-outer middle realms of linguistics, logic, mathematics, art, music, and so forth.

Unfortunately, poor quality scholarship, often done by politically motivated Hindutva experts, and frequently with exaggerations, has had the effect of discrediting the genuine Indic contributions.

World History:

World history is taught as the story of the West as the engine of change everywhere, and all others reduced to objects lacking agency. A proper appreciation of Indic traditions would overhaul the way world history is taught. Similar changes have already been made as a result of the rediscovery of Chinese and Islamic roles in the world.

Religious Studies:

Abrahamic religious categories have become the standard terms of reference in which all the religions of the world are commonly studied. The academic field of religion would expand and improve considerably if Indic categories were also utilized in the study of world religions.

Philosophy:

It might surprise many that to get a PhD in Indian Philosophy in a US philosophy department, one has to go to U of Hawaii or UT-Austin. Most other places have no IP at all in their philosophy departments, or worse still, they dismiss it quickly and superficially in an overview course on general philosophy. Mainstream Western philosophers are rather open about saying that *there is no such thing as Indian Philosophy*. Clearly, this needs to be reformed: Indian Philosophy must be part of the core curriculum, alongside Western Philosophy, and also be an elective by itself.

Furthermore, Indic influences upon classical Greece should be researched more actively.

Practical Yoga and Meditation:

Besides the theoretical disciplines mentioned above, the practice of yoga and meditation should be in the education system from K through 12. Documented benefits of this include: lowering of stress levels; better

concentration and attention spans; less drug/substance dependency; improved ethics (the yama/niyama levels); and more self discipline.

This would be especially beneficial to modern Indian society, where obsession for a utopian Westernization has led to decadence of indigenous traditions, degrading society into corruption, lack of civic sense, greed and chaos. This is the result of centuries of importation and reprogramming of gladiator samskaras into the Indian milieu. The land of yogis and rishis has become the land led by criminals in many instances.

Yoga/meditation are far more holistic, cost effective, and beneficial than the cricket-Bollywood culture.

III. Need for Universality and Authenticity

This proposed introduction of universalized Indic thought is not to be at the expense of acknowledging its Indic origins. Greek thought is positioned as being both universal *and* also as being specifically of Greek origin. The same treatment is even more applicable to a living tradition than to the dead Greek tradition. To be assimilated into the dominant culture, but repackaged as being Western, is a serious violence that dislocates the fruits from its roots: subsequent harvests are pre-empted.

Furthermore, connecting the dots to claim classical Indian thought causes contemporary Indian socio-political problems is a disservice. It is no more authentic than correlating present-day Greek corruption and other social disorders with classical Greek thought, or deciding the fate of the Greek Classics in the Western academy based upon the (mis)deeds of contemporary Greek politicians.

As is the case with the Greek Classics in the academy today, Indian Classics should enjoy *each* of the following:

1. Universal applicability should be the basis for their study and criticism, and not as being peculiar to a geographical region or ethnicity.
2. The Indic origins of these Classics should be preserved, just as is the case for their Greek counterparts. This would facilitate further development of these traditions worldwide and especially in their native soil.
3. Present-day Indian socio-political events should not become the basis for determining the fate of Indian Classics in education. Nor should the socio-politics of India be over-interpreted to claim causal dependence on the Indian Classics.

IV. Need for Constructive and Historical Scholarship

Too much scholarship about Indic traditions has been based on interpreting texts by superimposing the way Abrahamic religions view their canonized texts. But Indic classical texts are not read the way the Bible and Koran are *required* reading of their respective religions. Nor are the Indian texts deemed unique historical revelations, and hence frozen in time.

Ronald Inden traces this tendency of Indologists to essentialize Indic traditions as a ploy to deny agency to the Indian people, and to thereby claim agency as a service that the colonialists gave to the Indians as a gift.

However, Manu and other smriti writers make clear that the smritis are to be taken in context, and are to be rewritten for each age according to its needs. Far more than the Abrahamic religions do, the Indic traditions lend themselves to be constructive and not frozen in history.

Indian traditions have been constructed for every period and context. For example: Vedic ritual texts were followed by the construction of Upanishadic philosophies. Later, the Puranas were constructions as popular level interpretations of the same ideas. Then came the bhakti movements. Guru Nanak mobilized against

Muslim atrocities (as explained by him in the Guru Granth Sahib holy book), and the sequence of Sikh gurus that followed adopted various Muslim practices as part of their *Hindu* response — such as having one book, no deities in temples, monotheism, use of militancy to resist, and abolishment of caste like distinctions. Eventually, this revolution of Hinduism was spun off into a separate Sikh religion.

Ram Mohan Roy responded to Christian pressures by adopting certain Christian ideas and practices, yet firmly rooted in his Indic tradition. In recent times, Gandhi constructed social theory based on classical Indian principles. Sri Aurobindo's massive corpus and movements inspired by him are another example of constructive thought that extends classical Indian knowledge. The Dalai Lama has constructed extensions to classical Madhyamika Buddhism for modern times and for the global era, especially by his engagement with many forces outside orthodox Buddhism, such as outer scientists, Christian thinkers, and the West in general. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has made innovative interpretations of the Vedas with the help of modern Western quantum physicists, biologists, political thinkers and sociologists. The result is an impressive range of constructive theology with very practical consequences.

The vision of the Indian Classics entering the mainstream is, therefore, not of their entry as historical or museum pieces, but as living systems that become the basis for active engagement on contemporary issues. They should add to the repertoire of tools and practices with which humankind is to construct its collective future. For removal of doubt, I do not regard Indic Traditions as monolithic or homogeneous canons, but as organic and open-ended architectures.

Unfortunately, present circumstances in academe are not conducive to constructive Indic theology and sociology — as discussed later under the next section.

The Templeton Foundation's massive push into the field of Science and Religion is an excellent example of constructive theology, now being done with the help and involvement of various Nobel Laureates in Physics working alongside theologians. However, the focus has been on the Abrahamic religions, although recent promises to include Indic Traditions are commendable. Meanwhile, similar attempts on behalf of Indic Traditions are often ridiculed as quackery by pedigreed mainstream Western Indologists located in prestigious academic institutions, and by their Indian followers.

While literalist interpretations of the Old Testament enabled Israelis to rediscover many useful things such as desert farming, and while the majority of Christians in America and the overwhelming majority of Muslims worldwide believe in the literal interpretation of their respective canons, similar literalist interpretations of Hindu texts are attacked as fundamentalism. While many such Hindu attempts at interpretation are indeed ridiculous, they cannot be outlawed by decree. Constructive theology demands a creative license for reinterpretations today, even unscientific interpretations, in the name of diversity of thought and the creative process. Superior constructive work is bound to follow once this becomes a respected genre.

The single largest factor subverting constructive Indic Traditions today is the insider/outsider politics in academe, as explained below.

V. **Insiders Versus Outsiders**

Constructive theology and constructive sociology for any religion or tradition are usually done by those committed to the given system, who are, by definition, interested in keeping it alive and healthy in the competitive marketplace of ideas — i.e. *the insiders are the creators of such innovations*. Insiders are defined as practitioners, and constructions would be of interest to them because they would be its beneficiaries. On the other hand, the trend amongst outsiders has been to view the tradition as fossilized and not alive — that makes it easier to understand and essentializing facilitates the colonial/neocolonial agenda. This is why it is important to restore control over Indic scholarship back into the minds of those who claim these traditions and try to live by them.

For historical reasons, however, control over Indology has been with outsiders to these traditions, who have had agendas ranging from colonialism, to proselytizing, to eradicating them as scourges in the name of materialist progressive secularism.

No other major world religion has such a low percentage of insiders as does Hinduism, in its academic study today.

While Christianity and Islam also have their critics in academe, they have never in their histories been under colonial control of a foreign religion seeking to undermine them. This has given them *continuity of constructive theology and sociology* — something denied to Hinduism and Jainism for centuries, and to a large extent to Buddhism.

Furthermore, Christianity and Islam have had an unbroken system of seminaries for insider training, to counterbalance the criticism from secular academe, and to maintain a critical mass of insider thinking on a secure footing. This has not been the case for Hinduism, because until 1947, it did not have control over educational institutions or religions seminaries. After 1947, secularist policies misinterpreted subversion of Hinduism as a measure of progress.

At annual meetings of RISA (Religions In South Asia)⁵, there have been panels titled, Coming Out as a Hindu or Buddhist in the Academy, in which a small number of daring Hindu/Buddhist scholars come out in front of their peers, to establish their objectivity despite having a personal faith. However, no such coming out is required of academic Christians who dominate the study of world religions. There has never been a Coming Out as a Marxist in Religious Studies or a Coming Out as a Christian Proselytizer in Hinduism Studies. The atmosphere of intimidation against those seen as insiders has prevented unfettered constructive theology.

Scholars outside to the Indic Traditions are not free from contextual biases, because they are insiders to other (often competing) belief systems — based on culture, religion, race, gender, and political ideology.

This dominance by outsiders, often from worldviews competing aggressively against the Indic worldviews for market share, has resulted in a biased and skewed selection of topics studied, with the content filtered and the contexts manipulated.

It is important to clarify that insider is not determined by Indian ethnicity or a Hindu name, for instance, but by practice: many Indians with Hindu names, including a new crop coming out of places like Chicago with PhDs, are programmed to think the outsider way and are non practitioners.⁶

For all these reasons, one can see why constructive theology and sociology is the nemesis of RISA and other Indological control mechanism s, because as outsiders, such an approach would deny them control, and in general make their enterprise very difficult. Prosecuting a moving and diverse target is not as easy as hitting a static homogenized one.

In summary: **The Second Renaissance → Revival of Indic Classics → Constructive Indic Scholarship → Freedom for Insider Scholars.**

However, there is a major process in the exact opposite direction, as described in the next section.

VI. Obstacle: U-Turns from Indic Traditions

Inden explains that the West used the other, and especially India, to define and construct itself. This happened both in building the physical assets of the West and in the intellectual plane.

The intellectual appropriation continues to this day. My U-Turn Model describes this appropriation by which the West has been intellectually constructing itself. It consists of the following five Stages:

1. Student/disciple: In this Stage, the Westerner is very loyal to the Indic Traditions, and writes with the deepest respect. Many such scholars have genuinely tried and aspired to give up their Western identities and adopt Hinduism/Buddhism very sincerely. In many instances, India has helped the person to find himself/herself. A large number of scholars remain here for life, while others move on to subsequent Stages, not necessarily in the exact sequence below.
2. Neutral/new age/perennial repackaging: In this Stage, Indic traditions are repackaged as original discoveries by the scholar, or relocated by interpolating within obscure Greek, Christian or other Western texts, or assumed to be generic thoughts found in all cultures. In many instances, this brand management is done to expand the market for the books, tapes and seminars, by distancing oneself from the negative brands of the caste, cows and curry traditions.
3. Hero's return to his/her original tradition: Once the ego takes over and the scholar's native identity asserts itself, he/she returns to the native tradition, typically Judaism or Christianity, with bounties of knowledge to enrich it. Alternatively, the scholar repackages the material in secular vernacular, such as Western psychology or phenomenology or a scientific framework. Now the sales mushroom, as the Western audiences congratulate themselves for their culture's sophistication.
4. Denigrating the source: In this Stage, into which only some scholars proceed intentionally, they trash the source Indic Traditions. It furthers their claims of originality and absolves them from links to denigrated traditions. In some instance, Stages 3 and 4 are in reverse sequence.⁷
5. Mobilizing the sepoys and becharis: This is the phenomenon whereby Indians become proxies for Western sponsors, i.e. *sepoys*. (Becharis are women who overdo the I have been abused roles, so as to dramatize #4, in exchange for a benefit.) In return, they feel superior to ordinary Indians.⁸

The U-Turn syndrome results in what I have characterized as the **[De-]/[Re-]/[Mis-] Contextualizing of Indic Traditions**: De-Contextualizing is mainly done in Stage 2. Re-Contextualizing is what Stage 3 is all about. Mis-Contextualizing is what Stages 4 and 5 focus on.

Related to the U-Turn is the phenomenon of backward projection, which refers to the tendency to use one's current context in order to reinterpret the prior Stages of one's experience. For instance, it is common for scholars in Stages 2, 3, or 4 to claim that their prior stint in Stage 1 — even though it may have lasted for several decades — was misguided, or the work of the Devil, or because of being duped by an India guru, or the result of naiveté.

Usually, great efforts are made to erase or downplay the prior Stages, often acknowledged with embarrassment, and only when asked to do so. The latest Stage is given prominence to the extent of superceding and not just augmenting the prior ones. Many scholars of Hinduism and other Indic studies — from the hippie generations — are personally in these latter Stages, and project their latest allegiance and identity to project backwards. (For instance, it is common to hear the patronizing remark by many scholars that Hinduism helped him/her become a better Christian or Jew, and helped discover deeper layers of wisdom in her own religion than she was previously aware.)

Most historians now agree that history is not about reporting empirical and objective facts that exist about some past. Rather, the context of the present day historian (which is a culture specific context) is used to select the topics, filter the data, make the interpretations, and discover patterns by connecting the scattered dots. Therefore, history is typically rewritten by each generation as a backward projection.

Context shapes meaning in the popular mind. Some contextual contradictions in the popular mind, because of the U-Turns by individual scholars and/or by their followers, are:

- The US Natural Law Party is liberal, but Vedic (its source) is orthodox. (Is Hinduism = right-wing as alleged, or is Hinduism = left-wing?)
- Eliot is liberating, but Hinduism (his source of inspiration and much borrowing) is backward.
- Tielhard is Western, but Ramanuja (from whom he appropriated many key ideas) is Eastern.

- Ayurveda is obscure, but Aveda (based on Ayurveda) is a chic brand with Western women.
- Gita is Eastern religion, but *Baggar Vance* (a best selling fiction based on Gita) is pop literature.
- George Harrison is hip, but cremation/bathing in Ganga is superstitious.
- Jung is scientific, but Hindu ideas (which he borrowed as per his writings) are mystical.

European colonial writers saw India as the theater where *their* European history was playing out, rather than viewing it from the Indians perspective. (Recent movies such as *Lagaan* are reversing the perspective very effectively.) Likewise, may Judeo-Christian scholars use Hinduism Studies for their personal spiritual journey and to enrich their native religion.⁹

Not all stages take place in every case, and these stages might not happen in this exact sequence each time. Often, one scholar ends his/her career at a certain stage of this U-Turn process, and the successors continue further along this process.¹⁰ It is important to note that Eurocentrism is most often unintentional and unconscious, because the person is so immersed in the myths of Westernism, that unconscious Eurocentrism is simply assumed to be the right thing to do.¹¹

This U-Turn process has served, often unintentionally, as a way to plunder with one hand and denigrate the victim with the other. In earlier times, the Greeks appropriated some of their civilization from the Egyptians. Similarly, Christianity assimilated many pagan ideas, but the pagans got condemned.

Therefore, subverting India's Classics, while appropriating from them via a series of U-Turning scholars, is an important process for the sustenance of the myth of the West. In fact, Indology began as a massive European rigorous undertaking during colonial times, and went through each of the above stages of U-Turn. It glamorized Indian classics until the 17th century. In the 18th centuries, the process of claiming Indo-European universal ancestry began. In the 19th century, Indian classics were suddenly declared to be of European origin, i.e. Europeans got Aryanized. Consequently, Indian culture itself got denigrated as superstitious, primitive, and so forth, legitimizing colonialism as the White Man's Burden.

Today's South Asianized desis (as they call themselves) are, in many cases, serving Eurocentrism in Stage 5 of this process. Their knowledge of Indic culture is largely through stereotypes taught by persons from Stages 2 through 4, which they have accepted and used to re-engineer their own identities.

Christian Yoga is in Stage 3 at this time. Already, many Churches have entered Stage 4 by denigrating Hinduism/Buddhism while promoting Christian Yoga.

At New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Indian art from the Mughal period has been relocated into a section called Islamic Art, separating it from its Indian roots, whereas there is no separate section for Hindu/Buddhist art. This is an example of Stage 3 being brought about at the request of Arab donors to the museum's Islamic Art section..

VII. Some Consequences of the U-Turn Syndrome

Western Academic/Media Biases:

Critical bottlenecks of knowledge production and distribution — media, academic journals and presses, conferences, academic appointments — are under the control of outsiders to the Indic Traditions, just as was the case during colonial times. Indic civilization is marginalized in Western academics, even as compared to China/Japan studies and Middle Eastern/Islamic studies, not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively in the ratio of insiders to outsiders.

This situation calls for Satyagraha against the establishment¹², and a review of the ethics of the academic treatment of India's civilization.

Appendix 1 gives an analysis of the American school system's portrayal of India and recommended actions to remedy it.

Indian Neocolonialism:

Stage 5 has produced a peculiarly Indian notion of secularism, which is in sharp contrast with the American notion of secularism. For instance, Sanskrit and Indic Classics were marginalized in India's own education system, because of *The Evil Brahmin Conspiracy* theory, whereas Greek Classics are highly respected in American liberal arts education. Much of today's Indic Classical Studies has its nexus in the West, and is controlled by Western Churches, Government and Multinational funding. Asymmetric Indian laws *against* Hinduism were enacted and implemented as secularism, in contrast to the position enjoyed by Christianity in USA — all in the name of helping minority religions, the false assumption being that it is a zero sum game. India's *legalized* caste system based on birth (contrary to the varna system based on gunas and karma) brought about rigid political fragmentation and institutionalized stratification.

Blaming Hinduism for all social problems has disenfranchised the majority, and become a cottage industry.

India's Myth Vacuum:

Western civilization defines itself as a synthesis of Greek, Abrahamic and Roman classical myths, followed by layers of intellectual construction done by Europeans and Americans. This claims to provide a seamless *grand narrative* from the Beginning to the End of time, with cohesiveness, meaning, purpose, and identity to the idea of the West. Outsiders are described via sub-myths as inferior and dependent. An important part of the myth of Americanism is its religion. This went through the following trajectory: Protestantism → Christianity → Judeo-Christianity. The open question is: will it expand into Abrahamism (i.e. include also Islam) *or* into Pluralism (i.e. include all others)?

Jung's diagnosis of the crisis of the West was that it had no workable myth any more: old myths were dysfunctional. One of his major impacts was his launch of a grand new project, continued by his followers after him, to rewrite the Western myth — in which he used many Indic ideas, but his followers covered this appropriation.

The Templeton Foundation's Science + Religion → New Westernism is another remarkable myth remaking undertaking.

Against this background about the importance of a grand myth, let us examine India's crisis of myth today. India has become a playground for competing foreign myths:

- The prevailing myth vacuum was caused by the process: Colonial Myth → Indian Independence Movement Myths → Post-colonial Myth of Secularism. However, Secularism destroyed the indigenous Indic myths, seeing them as scourges and obstacles to progress, and this left a myth vacuum.
- Foreign competing myths entered this myth vacuum, and are now fighting for India as a territory, much like colonial era *British versus French versus Portuguese versus Dutch* battles for control over others. Each has a nexus outside India, from where the strings are pulled and funding provided:
 - Arab Cultural Imperialism via funding of madrassas is fighting Indianized Islam.
 - Further Persianization of India (e.g. Harvard's Urdu-Hindi and the relocation of Indian art into Pan-Islamic art at the Met in New York).
 - Various Christian Churches run like Multinationals, each with Western headquarters.
 - Globalization = World Bankism = Westernization = Economic Neocolonialism.
 - Neo-Marxism = further dislocation from the indigenous and native knowledge systems.
- The sponge theory of Indian history is used to legitimize this: namely, the claim that everything worthwhile was a foreign import anyway — leaving the caste system as the only indigenous development — and, therefore, these competing foreign controlled myths are not a new phenomena.

- The brown sahib syndrome is the Stage 5 process as work:
 - Foreign funded NGOs in India performing as proxies.
 - The *South Asianization Syndrome* on American campuses.
 - The Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Bharati Mukerjee, Somini Sengupta, Dinesh D Souza, etc. syndrome (in contradistinction to the *Lagaan* genre of movies that cater to the Indian masses.)
 - These Indian elites feed the Western master-narrative with sub-myths of exotic India as *caste, cows, and curry*. They get rewarded with foreign travel, PhDs, major book awards, etc.

Hindutva = Political Opportunism to Exploit the Disenfranchisement:

It is in the context of this myth vacuum that the recent Hindutva mobilization has taken root. There is lack of a new poly-myth: it would have to be progressive, inclusive, and yet rooted in Indic Traditions. The Hindutva movement is a response by political forces to exploit this vacuum.

The remedy for False Hindu Pride is to re-enfranchise the Hindu masses with respect for Indian myths and knowledge systems.

Many Hindutva activities have caused a backlash from educated modern Indian youth: they are alienated by old men doing weird, illogical rituals, perceived human rights abuses, and the orthodoxy that comes across as being anti-modern.

There are two kinds of responses from within the Hindu community that I shall examine next: The first is World Negation and the second is False Hindu Pride. I reject both these, as explained below.

VIII. The Problem of World Negation

Many individuals who understand the crisis facing Indic Traditions, and are concerned about them, still fail to effectively do anything, for a variety of reasons summarized here.

Loftiness:

While leading socially and economically active lives on the one hand, many persons seem stuck exclusively on the theology of renunciation, including when they address students and householders (who dominate the demographic composition of the community).

The common arguments one hears to justify this world negation stance run along one or more of the following lines:

- DISENGAGE FROM OTHERS: I am a yogi and don't believe in criticizing others, because mine is internal sadhana.
- ILLUSION THEORY: Since it is all mithya, anyway, why bother fixing this external illusory reality. (This led Mother Teresa's sponsors to claim that Indic culture is inherently inferior on this count. Ronald Inden called this the patient-doctor relationship, in which the colonized gets placed in an institution run by the colonizer.)
- SAMENESS THEORY: Just as every drop of water falling from the sky ultimately reaches the ocean, no matter what path it takes, so also every jiva ultimately reaches Brahman. Therefore, why should I criticize another's path?
- KARMA = FATALISM: To the extent it could be called suffering (while in reality it is only mithya), whatever is happening is meant to be happening, based on prarabdha caused by one's own past life karma.

- FALSITIES ARE OF NO CONSEQUENCE: Since the critics are ignorant — for instance, they are academic theoreticians with no experiential grounding to know the real truth — what they say is of no consequence, and hence, it is a waste of time trying to argue with them.

However, this is tantamount to approval of adharma. There are many sound arguments opposing this world negation thesis:

- Historically, Indians were also very advanced in the external realm as compared to, say, Europeans of that time. This is evidenced from Harappan times to pre-colonial times, in materialistic, artistic and economic performance. Outer is not in opposition to Inner, based on historical evidence. Hence, Jung's warning, that Westerners beware against the practice of yoga for it would make them less scientific, rational, and progressive, was based on his false diagnosis of poverty in modern India.
- After attaining moksha/nirvana, great figures in Classical India positively engaged the world — Buddha, Shankara, Ramanuja, Abhinavagupta, Kabir, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, and many others. Inner heights did not cause them to neglect the outer, and on the contrary, they became more committed to outer engagement. With so many exemplars having lived *world affirming* lives, one wonders why many teachers continue to glorify passivity as the way to enlightenment?
- The whole moral of Gita is on this very issue: Arjuna starts off as world negating, using many arguments similar to those listed above. The whole scripture revolves around the importance of a yogi also being able to engage the outer realm, including doing actions that appear unpleasant. This has to be done selflessly.
- *Brahmin and kshatriya dharmas are job descriptions* for work pertaining to inner and outer realms, respectively. This separation and distinction is very deeply enshrined in Hindu thought. It equates roughly to today's Western notion of separation of church and state, which is falsely considered a unique discovery of the West. (Basing these jobs on birth was a corruption and abuse of the varna system, just as nepotism today in giving jobs to one's kids would be.) This doctrine also emphasizes that neither inner nor outer can be subverted or ignored by the other.
- It seems that colonizers emphasized this world negating loftiness among Indians, because it enabled them to make the populace into their servants, and yet allow the masses to feel that it was in their own tradition. This ethos of glorifying weakness, dependence, and servitude, was constructed as the opposite of the dominant culture's own self image as being in charge and destined to rule. The British influence in this regard went far deeper and in more sophisticated ways than the prior Muslims impact. This led to an over-emphasis upon certain selected Hindu texts, without looking even at the complete picture within those texts.
- Gandhi is falsely portrayed as being passive, whereas he emphasized the importance to stand up against injustice. His was a path of intense self sacrifice to stand up and confront the opponent so as to bring down the mechanisms that sustain the opponent —largely via economic boycotts and refusal to obey unjust laws. Too many so-called Gandhians today are using a false interpretation of Gandhi as a way to legitimize being lazy, inactive, and TV couch potatoes. The first requirement of Gandhi, of starting with supreme self sacrifice - be the change that you want to see in the world - is not evident in these so-called Gandhians' lives.
- All rivers do not end up in one big Ocean. Some also end up in the Dead Sea. Otherwise, there would be moral relativism — i.e., anything goes, including adharmic ways. Hinduism = way of life has become a dangerous copout by those failing to properly explain what it means. Even the drug culture, Al Qaeda lifestyle, corruption, and so forth, are a way of life. In fact, *every* lifestyle is a way of life of one kind or another.

- Karma is *not* fatalism. On the contrary, by explaining one's present circumstance within a logical system, it compels the person to take full responsibility for his choices in the present moment, and to stop blaming the universe for the present moment.
- Advaita Vedanta is the only worldview, out of many Hindu theologies, that could possibly be interpreted as being world negating. All other worldviews, include many Vedanta interpretations, Kashmir Shaivism, Shakta/Devi paths, and so forth, are explicitly world affirming. Even Advaita Vedanta is not calling for escape or copout in the face of social responsibility.

Discomfort with Competition, and Inexperience with Institutions:

Refusing to compete does not get rid of competition. The dominant world religions clearly see it as a competitive marketplace on a global scale.¹³ Every competitive arena — marketing, politics, sports, military, etc. — requires both offensive and defensive capability.

Most Indians are very reluctant to embrace the critical and dispassionate study and critique of religions in a comparative manner, as is commonly done in the West. Therefore, they have failed to develop the skills and resources to be effective in this regard. The lofty world negation arguments are the standard excuse.

Furthermore, to compete today, one cannot refuse to institutionalize, or fail to study the institutions that exist, both those belonging to other traditions and secular ones. Leaders of the Indic Traditions have failed to study how the Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Arabs, Jews, and other successful minority groups have organized and mobilized to get ahead utilizing American norms and institutions.

As a special case, they have failed to appreciate the importance of the formal education system, and continue to confuse it with preaching in ashrams.

In general, there is a rural mindset, when the opponents are well oiled urbanized institutions. While many of the statements by Indians are true — concerning the superiority of inner experience, etc. — they are irrelevant to the given context and circumstances.

Orthodoxy Against Adaptation:

There is also great confusion between education within the traditions (in-reach) and education of those on the outside (out-reach). Especially in countries, such as USA, where the Indian population is less than 1% of the total population, failure to engage the outsiders has led to isolation of the community.

Since many Indian American kids are being raised under heavy external influence, the osmosis method of teaching in India — through routine influence in an informal and subliminal manner and with no need for formal education — is not applicable. Yet, one commonly hears claims that dharma is not to be taught, because it comes natural to those with the samskaras.

Related to this is the failure to acknowledge the importance of English as a language in which the traditions must also be presented in compelling ways, and to audiences who are Western or Westernized Indians and who are not going to live the Vedic lifestyle.

In general, strategies where a given tradition is in the majority cannot simply be assumed to work where it is a minority. This is where the Islamic doctrine of *al-taqiyah* should be examined and appreciated — it is the art of diplomacy and adaptation in contexts where Islam is outnumbered by others.

IX. The Problem of False Hindu Pride

The Aryan controversy has often dominated the intellectual discourse on Indian history, and the Ram Temple at Ayodhya has become the nexus for Hindu triumphalism on the ground. These two foci have consumed the resources of many Hindus, and are unfortunately seen as the defining issues of the day.

Those swept by these currents seem ideologically inbred, and live in intellectual enclaves and cocoons. They seem only superficially aware of many of the issues discussed in this essay, and even less engaged in actually *doing* something effective about them.

Narrow-minded Definitions of Hinduism:

The starting point for this mindset seems to be a very orthodox definition of Hinduism:

- It is assumed to be Vedic, when in fact, many Hindus follow non Vedic traditions, such as Shakta/Goddess, Tantra, Kashmir Shaivism and other non Vedic traditions whose founders were specifically anti or at least non Vedic.
- Hinduism is considered to be universal and yet also *contingent* upon uniquely Indian culture. This has sometimes turned into an anti-modernity stance. Furthermore, there is opposition to English educated Indians, when they should be catering specifically to this rapidly expanding market segment. Some have taken Hinduism to mean anti-secularism, when in fact, they should be explaining that secularism is already contained in the dharmic - as the separation of brahmin and kshatriya jobs and as the mandate to respect others svadharma - and that modern Indian secularism has misinterpreted it into a dangerous zero sum game.
- This movement has dislocated itself from the 20 million American neo-Hindus who are sincerely engaged in yoga and related practices, and identify with Hindu ideas at various levels of affinity. Likewise, they have also become alienated from the Indian American youth (and I am told also the Westernized youth in India) who are very modern, socially progressive, and who see the Hindu orthodoxy as grumpy and angry old men from a bygone era.
- Forced homogenization is counter to the spirit and ethos of dharma and its diverse pluralistic history. There is a dangerous tendency of reducing Hinduism into another monotheism built on Ram's history and the sacred geography of Ayodhya.

Overemphasis upon Ritualism/Astrology:

Temple ritualism often appears like voodoo to the youth, who therefore go to temples infrequently. Astrology has been introduced in India's higher education as the silver bullet, when there are so many better entry points via the Indian Classics. One is left wondering why the following dimensions are excluded in most US temples, thereby missing out on major opportunities:

- **Raja Yoga:** Why are temples not the yoga centers of American society, bringing a very uniquely Indic contribution to the neighborhood? Had this been part of the long term vision, many of the nearly 10,000 yoga centers in USA would have been in the temples, giving them a different aura of relevance and quality.
- **Karma Yoga:** Why are Hindu organizations not at the forefront of social contributions to American society, in the same manner as one finds from Jewish and Christian charities? Why is the typical Hindu temple not a community center known for its neighborhood outreach programs?
- **Jnana Yoga:** Why are Hindu scholars not explicitly at the vanguard of the new thinking on the variety of disciplines listed at the beginning of this essay, where there is considerable scope for positive Indic contributions — such as psychology, mental health, philosophy, social ethics, etc.?

Neither the temple pujaris/purohits nor their management are worried about this myopia and cocoon mentality. The one-liner bumper sticker fast-food of ritualism and superficial talk has failed to impress the next generation.

Meanwhile, the user friendly dharma for young global audiences seems to have been separated from its origins and taken over by the new age.

Lack of Institutional Quality:

There is no equivalent of a seminary where temple priests would receive continued education to be able to compete against their Christian counterparts. How many temple priests are able to explain the religion and its rituals in meaningful ways to today's modern clientele, or debate at local interfaith events, or be interviewed by local TV or press, or be able to speak at a local school multicultural event? Why have the temple committees replicated the village scene from India, entirely out of context for the US?

There is also a dire shortage of competent scholars to research and debate academic scholars in the discipline. The scholars most often relied upon by Hindu nationalists have not had the benefit of peer reviews for healthy criticism and quality control. Too often, hyper exaggerated claims are bombastically announced amidst cheering audiences who are starved for legitimacy, and thereby accept anything and everything positive presented to them.

Institutions should not be new to Indic culture, for there existed world class viharas (institutions) in classical times. Somehow, the revival of Hinduism has focused on the wrong priorities.

As a consequence of the lack of adequate institutions, there has not been any respectable constructive theology or constructive sociology in the manner described earlier in this essay. The focus has been on going back to some golden era, even though:

- That golden era probably supported a population of under 50 million people, and modern technology is necessary to support a billion people today;
- To survive in a competitive climate, one must learn about competitors and keep up with them, which cannot be achieved by the prevailing introverted mindset;
- The youth have rejected the orthodox lifestyle and they must be heard.

Finally, there is no think tank where serious scholars research and debate issues free from politics and immediate pressures.

Misplaced Heroism:

This is the syndrome of over optimism, wishful thinking, and refusal to do the grunt work of scholarship to build one's case.

For instance, when planning a review of school textbooks, I was pre-empted by a very confident community leader that this was already taken care of, on the basis that his organization had stated this goal in its brochure years ago. Given that he was a retired school superintendent from New Jersey, one would expect him to be well positioned to achieve this claim. However, upon pushing him to produce a draft of any of his textbook reviews, he backed out of his claims, by saying that he intended to do this very soon. A couple of years have passed, and he has not yet produced *any* textbook critique. Recently, he called for a meeting of some random persons to get the process started. This type of achievement claim forestalls genuine mobilization. Meanwhile, pictures of such persons in White House visits are published as accomplishments of the ego.

An Indian economics professor, upon hearing my talk about the need to study the economic drain from India during colonial times, so as to assess its impact upon historical growth rates of various civilizations, instantly claimed that he had this study ready to go — reciting his academic credentials of several decades

in economics. But upon closer cross-examination, it was to be just another typical quick-and-dirty piece of rhetoric. When a detailed work plan was asked for, and items of research to be found in archives were to be discussed, his attitude was: this is too much unnecessary work; we don't need to work so hard. Basically, this attitude is one of trivializing what needs to be done. At the same time, whenever there is some dignitary visiting from India, this lot is right up there being introduced as community leaders.

Another kind of superficiality is illustrated in the article posted at:

<http://www.sulekha.com/redirectnh.asp?cid=215622> It contains the goody-goody things happening to Hinduism in America, a positive story, but without scratching beneath the surface. For instance, it fails to mention that the hoopla about so many temples in USA pertains mainly to immigrant Indians who got their traditional grounding while growing up in India. These temples have not attracted many young Indian Americans who are raised in the US, especially after the age when they leave home for college. No tradition survives if it fails to pass its values and practices on to the next generation. For a better analysis of the next generation, the journalist would have had to look at the pathetic situation in many American colleges concerning Indic traditions. The author seems ignorant about the issue of textbook biases and media portrayal. He does not compare Indic traditions in USA with other minority religions of the US so as to gain a comparative perspective. This article is typical of the superficial coverage back in India, to make people feel happy. It feeds the false pride of Hindu leaders who can claim great accomplishments.

My final category of misplaced heroism is of those who mess up presenting even a well documented case, by being more interested in gaining personal mileage than in pursuing a systematic process to bring about results. Too many such loud voices get to the front of the crowd, craving to be seen and heard as leaders, but without doing the prerequisite homework to know enough. Needless to say, these ill-conceived rejoinders backfire due to lack of critical thinking and scholarship expertise.

Politics Confused as Seva:

Many Hindu community leaders are engaged in personal politics in the name of dharmic seva (service to society). They are concerned with appropriating others work for their own political goals, and are not concerned about the dharma per se.

Many of the Hindu organizations in USA are vehicles for ego trips for those who failed to satisfy their egos in their respective professions or businesses. Hence, getting their names in every conceivable letterhead or newsletter or organizing committee seems to be of overriding importance.

Ultimately, any movement's image is defined by the quality of its leaders and spokespersons. This is why several educated, well meaning and modern Hindus do not wish to associate with the Hindu revival movement.

Speaking for myself, I have defined myself as a non Hindutva Hindu, in order to stay away from this phenomena.

Anger as Substitute for Rigor:

Hinduism's leaders have failed to introspect on their shortcomings, so as to diagnose, strategize, and reposition.

Therefore, they execute mainly out of desperation and incompetence. This anger is often taken out at those seen as outsiders of various sorts. What is required is not anger but hard work and intelligence.

While the attitudes described as World Negating and those described as False Hindu Pride seem to oppose each other in terms of being escapist and confrontational, respectively, I have come across a large number of persons who have both qualities simultaneously: there are those who define their positions in ways that would qualify them as world negators, *but* get very upset when they sense threat, and suddenly jump over to Hindu nationalist positions. Conversely, many Hindu nationalists, when cornered by arguments that they have not adequately contemplated, suddenly hit the escape button and start reciting shlokas of lofty world

negation. There is clearly a major cognitive dissonance prevalent on a rather large scale, that deserves deeper analysis than I was able to do here.

X. Proposing: The Mandala Framework

The Mandala framework for Indic Traditions proposed here is one that transcends conventional dialects of left versus right, seeks to dialog the insider and outsider views, and combines historical examinations with constructive scholarship. Hence, it is able to borrow from each side of a pair of opposites, as well to criticize each pole. The Mandala is a space of open inquiry, both critical and constructive, into which the serious thinker is invited. It is a process rather than a conclusion.

Visually, it is a square with four gates. The vertical axis of this mandala is more synchronic and spatial (inner-outer) in nature, emphasizing the domains of inner and outer arts and sciences, while the horizontal axis is more diachronic or temporal (past-present) in nature, covering portrayals of India's past history and present society.

The Mandala's four gates represent four predispositions of most persons, thereby inviting a given individual to enter through the most appealing and compatible gate. While there may be considerable overlap between the subjects and disciplines distributed among these gates, nevertheless these four represent approaches or orientations toward Indic studies which are typically (if artificially) kept distinct. Most individuals are often drawn toward or exposed to Indic traditions from a perspective represented mainly by one of these gates.

While a great deal may be learned from any one of these perspectives alone, such a one-sided approach invariably yields a distorted understanding of India and of Indic traditions as a whole. Thus, by presenting this Mandala in its entirety, we intend that audiences initially drawn to (or even expert in) one gate will be inspired to travel around inside the Mandala to encounter and learn the perspectives of the other gates. Once one is better educated about each of these four perspectives, one will have a more informed, nuanced, and holistic understanding of Indic traditions and may then be said to be truly "inside the Mandala" of Indic traditions.

Once inside the Mandala, there is the openness towards cross-fertilization amongst various specialists, and hopefully, a new discussion and construction, whose precise characteristics may not be possible to anticipate up front. This Mandala metaphor is thus a device designed to encourage persons to develop, enrich, and transform their mutual understandings of India. We believe that when sufficiently implemented on a large enough scale this has great potential to trigger multiple paradigm shifts.

The vertical gates are Inner and Outer, respectively. The Inner gate represents interests in pursuing the adhyatma-vidya (inner sciences) — yoga, meditation, various creative visualizations, and other therapies of positive, humanistic and transpersonal psychologies — impacting one's health, stress, ethics, attentiveness, aesthetics, and more. The members of the new age movement would find this a meaningful gate, as would most practitioners of spirituality in general.

A common misperception is that the inner paths lead to negation of outer realms, neglect of society, and lack of conventional progress. Jung was a recent theorist who criticized Indian culture on this basis and caused a major setback to Indic traditions.¹⁴ *The Outer accomplishments of Indic civilizations are a major untold story, one that completely refutes and puts to rest the fear that the pursuit of the inner journey would cause poverty, social irresponsibility and lack of innovation.* The holistic combination of inner and outer, as evidenced in classical Indian texts and archeological records, demonstrates that these are symbiotic aspects rather than opposite poles. This serves to refute the common view that one must choose between the wisdom of the East and the technological progress of the West.

Hopefully, historians shall take a fresh look at India, and, in addition to studying kings wars and foreign invasions, they shall consider India's inner sciences and its outer traditional knowledge systems (TKS) as

relevant aspects of the people. Study of the outer realm gives an insight into the enormous technical and manufacturing activity that made India so materially rich that it attracted foreign incursions in the first place. Without appreciating such the TKS, historical portrayals of India too often present invaders as bringing civilization to an economically primitive and socially feudalistic India.

Models for understanding "Society Today" will be far better informed through an appreciation of the disciplines of the other gates. Without going within the Mandala to develop a more "well-rounded" understanding of India, social and cultural phenomena in India today are too often seen as exotica. A narrow approach which assumes that the source of India's social and economic problems today must be found only within the Indic traditions themselves (as opposed to being in large part the legacy of the history of colonialism, for example) has often lead scholars of anthropology, social science, and religion to grossly misread Hinduism and Buddhism as world-negating. Ancient Sanskrit texts as well as contemporary beliefs and practices are then interpreted through this extremely distorting lens.

Today, the Inner Science and TKS gates have received the least attention amongst competent scholars. Therefore, while all four gates must be fully appreciated and thoroughly studied, far greater emphasis now must be placed on the study of these two gates. The histories, perspectives, theories, technologies, and methodologies of the inner sciences and the TKS' will provide the basis for a "thicker description" (and hence a better understanding) of India's history and society today. These improved, more nuanced understandings will then feed back to better inform the other two, and we will have significantly advanced both the study of India's diverse traditions, as well as our appreciation of what these rich traditions may yet have to offer to the global mandala.

The relevance of each Gate and their cross fertilization is further elaborated below.

Outer (Traditional Knowledge Systems):

The present day globalizing economy, with its mass media glorifying the Western lifestyle, is resulting in the homogenization of human wants and leading to unachievable expectations. *Conventional Western technology by itself cannot deliver or sustain this false promise to the entire world*, for several reasons:

- Westernized lifestyle is unachievable by the billions of poor, because the capital required simply does not exist in the world, and the trickle down effect is too slow to reach the bottom tier where most of humanity lives.
- The present economic order depends upon inequality — there must be cheap labor somewhere else, and cheap natural resources purchasable from somewhere, without regard to the big picture of global society or ecology. This practical necessity of global capitalism conflicts with the equal rights of states and persons that have been long theorized and promoted. Drastic proposals, such as opening all borders and allowing free competition among all workers, are blocked with excuses that contradict the popular freedom slogan.
- The Western economic development model demands growth to sustain valuations in the stock markets, and indefinite growth is impossible in a finite population. A steady state economy in zero growth equilibrium would devastate the wealth of the west, since the financial models are predicated on growth.
- Even if the above obstacles could be overcome and the world's six billion persons were to achieve western lifestyle, it would be unsustainable for the planet's natural resources.

Inner Sciences:

The Inner Sciences of India have been on the one hand appropriated by the West, and on the hand have been depicted as being in conflict with the progressive, rational, and materialistic West. In fact, inner and outer realms are too often viewed as opposites, that can at best be balanced because one contradicts the other. This bias assumes that Inner Sciences make a person and society less productive, less creative, and less competitive in the outer realm. However, India's TKS achievements are empirical evidence to

demonstrate that Inner Sciences and outer development can and did coexist in a mutually symbiotic relationship. This is a major reason to properly study India's TKS. Without removing this tension between inner and outer, it would be difficult to seriously motivate the modern world to advance in the Inner Sciences in a serious way.

Inner progress without the outer would be a world negating worldview, which India's TKS record shows not to be the case in classical India. Outer progress without inner cultivation results in societies that are too materialistic, too selfish to the point of genocides and holocausts, eco-unfriendly, and dependent upon force and control for social harmony.

History:

Until the 1800s, TKS generated large scale economic productivity for Indians. Traditionally, India was one of the richest nations in the world, and most Indians were neither 'backward' nor uneducated nor poor. Some historians have recently begun to come out with this side of the story, demonstrating that it was massive economic drainage, oppression, social re-engineering, and so forth at the hands of colonizers that made millions of 'new poor' over the past few centuries. This explanation yields a radically different diagnosis of the poverty in India today. Upon acknowledging India's traditional knowledge systems, one is forced to discard accounts of its history that essentialize its poverty and the accompanying social evils. The reality of TKS contradicts notions such as:

- Indians were less rational and scientific than the west.
- Indians were world negating in outlook (which is a misreading of the Inner Sciences), and hence did not advance.
- India's civilization was mainly gifted by invaders, except that problematic aspects, such as caste, were India's own 'essences'.
- Indian society was socially backward (to the point of being accused of lacking in morality); hence it depends upon Westernization to reform its society.

Society Today:

Is India a 'developing' society, or is it a 're-developing' society? Without appreciating the TKS of a people, how could anthropologists and sociologists possibly interpret the current condition of a society? Were they always poor, always living in polluted and socially problematic conditions as today, in which case these problems would be *essences*? Or is there a history behind the present conditions? (This history should not, however, excuse the failures of fifty years of independence to deal properly with the economic and social problems that persist.)

A constructive approach to the study of Indian society is desired, as opposed to one that is frozen in history. This should combine inner and outer, indigenous and Western, left and right. For instance, Traditional Knowledge Systems that are eco-friendly, symbiotic with the environment, and therefore could help provide a sustainable lifestyle, should be integrated with modernity. Since the benefits of heavy industries does not trickle down to the people below the poverty line, or to so-called developing countries, a revival of certain traditional technologies and crafts must complement the modern 'development' schemes for eradication of poverty.

Beyond the Global Gridlock:

We believe it is time that progressive scholars restart global cross-cultural dialogue on a non-hegemonic and equal footing, open to the possibility that one civilization or another may be superior on one aspect or another.

Scholars who do *not* share this mission tend to adopt one of four tendencies:

1. **Western Triumphalism:** These scholars state baldly that hegemony is historically natural and rationally desirable: The winners in history are, they claim, superior, as this is also a pattern seen in evolution. As in nature, the victor consumes the defeated, and appropriates the positive aspects of those conquered. Hence, the contemporary West is the latest and best civilization, and the rightful owner of everything it has and could appropriate. Others should now join it, and abandon prior and defeated civilizations, since they are now obstacles and scourges. Very few scholars today still overtly take this stance.
2. **Denial:** These deny that mainstream academic work is expressive of hegemony at all. While being in denial, they are intellectually familiar with the neocolonized structures. They are not so much in need of knowledge as of empathy. While issues of alternative interpretation are intellectually important in engaging with them, the larger aim is to persuade them of the worth of changing their outlook.
3. **Paternalism:** These persons genuinely feel empathetic to Indic or other non-Western traditions. They often speak passionately against Western triumphalism, and for the interests of the subaltern. However, since they still tend to assume (perhaps unconsciously) the cognitive or intellectual superiority of the "modern," or "Western" civilization, they often discount the non-Western traditions' abilities to speak for themselves. Such persons might have been well-meaning missionaries in previous centuries; nowadays they are often well-meaning but Eurocentric liberals. Political correctness often motivates the patronizing posture, but when equality is asserted strictly based on merit and, they are threatened to a point of disbelief, and eventually anger. Paternalism is simply a cover for stealth Eurocentrism.
4. **Reverse Triumphalism:** These "orthodox nativists" believe the "modern Western" approach to be wholly negative or even evil, and feel that the dogmatic assertion of some rediscovered and imagined "indigenous" worldview to be their utopia.

We hope that persons who share our vision discover and encourage each other, and help to develop a movement of dialogue that avoids the above four patterns.

Proposed Structure for Constructive Scholarship:

The four-gate structure of the Mandala is a provisional, creative framework for discussion and exploration; it is not intended to be rigid. Likewise, we have tentatively organized the themes for constructive scholarship into the following three general areas, but we welcome suggestions to enhance this framework.

(A) Reconstruction and Applicability of Indic Social Sciences:

Here the focus is on challenging the pervasive stereotype of Indic social unconsciousness with concrete examples and critical analysis. We challenge scholars to collect critiques of the commonly held view that critical, structural analysis of society is a uniquely Western invention, to discover to what extent indigenous Indian social thinkers have been engaged in this *type* of analysis, and to present Indic social/scientific theories which suggest similarities or continuities with contemporary types of critical approach.

(B) Indic Intellectual Challenges to Western modernism/postmodernism:

Here the focus is to explore the dissimilarities or discontinuities, seeking to highlight possible contributions that Indic theories might make to the global discourse, implicitly (or explicitly) challenging the chauvinistic and modernistic notions that contemporary Western critical social sciences necessarily produce superior analyses of and models for contemporary society.

(C) Strategies to Better Utilize Indic Contributions for the Global Renaissance:

This deals in a broad summary way to pinpoint misperceptions of the "Indic" in Society Today, especially as perpetuated through discourse and structures within the Academy, and to suggest ways to redress these distortions as well as to present potentially positive but overlooked Indic contributions. This includes both presenting empirical data that refute the current misperceptions, as well as theoretical analysis of such meta-level issues as the current structure of the Academy (its disciplinary and departmental divisions, curricula, and so forth), suggestions for its restructuring, and strategies for overcoming the structural, procedural, or attitudinal obstacles to better incorporation of non-Western and traditionally time-tested arts and sciences. This also raises pedagogical and methodological issues regarding emic and etic approaches to Indic studies, the (re)integration of Hindu and Buddhist histories, and so forth. We hope to encourage scholars to discuss the types of paradigm shifts that might be necessary across a wide variety of fields, and the types of ideal agenda for systematic investigation, publication, and dialogue over the coming decade, in order to involve mainstream academia in the process of completing, rather than resisting, the coming global renaissance.

APPENDIX 1

TEACHING INDIA: MISPORTRAYALS AND THEIR CAUSES

I. What's Wrong With the Current Portrayal?

There is a two-fold problem in the portrayal of India in U.S. education.

Problem 1: Focus is on the Negative

A. Stereotypes pertaining to the contemporary society of India:

- India is primitive, hence outdated and irrelevant.
- Indian society is dominated by the caste system, which is rigid and intrinsic. Hence, it is rife with inequities and violence - the result of The Evil Brahmin Conspiracy.
- Lack of morality: Indians place no value on human life.
- Kali and other horrible images indicate violence and ugliness inherent in Hinduism.
- Because of classical Hinduism, Indian women are repressed and do not have rights.
Therefore, women in India are often killed as infants, or when married for their dowries, or when their husbands die (sati).
- India has always been a poor country.
- India is exotic (caste, cows and curry image), hence not to be taken seriously.
- Classical Indian thought caused bad environmental ethics, resulting in today's pollution.
- Animal symbols in religion indicating animal worship.

B. Stereotypes pertaining to Indian philosophy and religion:

- Indian thought is mythical or at best mystical and pre-scientific, rather than rational.
- To the extent there is any Indian Philosophy, it was brought by the Greek and the British.
- Indic traditions lack self-reflection, critical thinking and secular know how.
- Indian religions are world-negating, hence not progressive.
- Indian never had any sense of history, which is linked to a notion of circular time in which progress is impossible.
- Indian religions are polytheistic; hence, by association, primitive (pre-monotheism), pagan.
- Indians worship idols, hence false gods.
- Being a Hindu requires that you renounce your individuality, become fatalistic, and give up responsibility to a guru. Hence, they cannot advance like the west. Karma = fatalism.
- Hindus run around naked and smoke drugs.
- Hindus are phallus worshippers.
- Hindus are extremists who like to destroy mosques and kill Christians.
- Hindus bathe in the Ganga to wash away their sins, because they are superstitious.

C. Stereotypes concerning India's irrelevance to the West:

- Indians need to learn from the West, but not the other way around.
- All of the positive aspects of Indian civilization were brought from Greece and other foreign places, albeit in a diluted and corrupt form.
- Whatever good there is in modern India is due to the British.
- India is a hopelessly chaotic country.

Assessment: After reading this kind of material in one's impressionable years, it is hard for a young person to identify with India's traditions. Such an outlook on India has assumed a life of its own. Far too many educators now believe it, without questioning the authenticity or basis. Academic scholars walk

around with blinders looking only for confirmatory evidence. But the counter evidence, which is overwhelming, is not given equal treatment.

Problem 2: India's Positive Contributions to the world are ignored.

India's numerous contributions to the world may be divided into four periods. (*The contributions of ALL civilizations must be included, and many civilizations already are. The following is not intended to be at the expense of other great civilizations, and these contributions should be portrayed alongside other cultures .*)

A. Ancient Contributions

- Indians made pioneering contributions in mathematics:
 - The Arabic numeral system was invented in India
 - So too was the decimal system of enumeration
 - As was the concept of zero
 - Geometry was developed in the Vedic tradition predating Pythagoras or Euclid
 - Algebra was likewise developed in India and transmitted by the Arabs to Europe.
 - Differential calculus was developed in India long before it was in Europe
- Astronomy was a sophisticated science in India
- Metallurgy was an advanced science in India:
 - Indians developed rust-proof iron
 - Indian steel was of higher quality, manufactured faster and more efficiently than anywhere else in the world as of 1800s
- Many discoveries in chemistry and medicine were made in India
- Indians had a sophisticated understanding of the environment:
 - Sustainable Agriculture was highly developed in India
 - Indigenous traditions of Forestry were sophisticated and sustainable
 - Water harvesting technologies permitted agriculture and clean drinking water in a wide variety of terrains
- Indians made many cultural contributions to other countries
 - Indian political theory was highly influential throughout Asia
 - The study of Linguistics was invented in India, taken to a sophisticated level there, and influenced the development of modern linguistics
 - Indian traditions of Logic were very advanced
 - India has profound theories of ethics
 - Indian philosophy was highly influential throughout the world
 - Psychology of mind was a very advanced science in India, which only in the past century became a discipline in the west.
 - Indian traditions of spirituality have great global influence
 - Prominent American scholars believe that many Indian religious practices were an influence on the development of early Christianity.
 - Indian literature, art and architectural traditions, as well as aesthetics, had great influence on the development of culture throughout Asia
 - There are now 20 million Americans doing Yoga and meditation brought from India

B. Medieval and Early Modern Contributions

- The Indian steel industry served the needs of the Middle East and Europe, and aided the British to develop their own steel industry

- The Indian Textile industry produced very high quality goods, and dominated the supply of textiles to the world
- Indian merchants were at the center of a global free trade network which prospered until taken over by the colonialists
- Indian literature was a major influence on the development of European literature in the early modern era.
- The modern science of linguistics developed in the West through the study of Indian grammatical and linguistic theory.

C. Modern Contributions

- Indian thought influenced Schrodinger's development of Quantum Mechanics
- Modern Indian scientists, such as Bose, had an impact on the technological development in the 20th century
- Modern American literature has been highly influenced by Indian thought — T.S. Eliot, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, the Beats, etc.
- European philosophers such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Mill, James and Whitehead were highly influenced by Indian philosophy.
- The Indian doctrine of non-violence as embodied by Gandhi was a major influence on the Civil Rights movement.

D. Postmodern Contributions

- Indian theories and practices are playing an important role in the development of post-modern worldviews in consciousness and cognitive science, literary theory, cosmology, and mental health.
- Indian contributions in the field of information technology are already appreciated
- Ayurvedic medicine is gaining increasing respect in the contemporary world
- Research is increasingly showing that the ancient Indian vegetarian diet, combined with yoga and meditation, improves health, is environmentally friendly, and is economically sustainable.
- Indian music and fashion is gaining greater appreciation throughout the world

Assessment: *One must wonder why the majority of portrayals ignore so much positive material available about India to choose from. At issue here is the relevance of the overall portrayal to today's students.*

II. Causes of this (Mis)portrayal

- India is viewed from a Eurocentric lens:
 - This tendency has its roots in the colonial encounter
 - Orientalism: Europeans described the other in Eurocentric terms
 - Christian missionaries saw European dominance as ordained by God
- Historically, Orientalism was encouraged during the Colonial period:
 - Colonizers violently and systematically appropriated the lives, labor, goods and technologies of the colonized
 - They legitimized this by claiming that they were saving the others
 - European concepts and cultural values were imposed as universal
 - Those who differed from them were labeled primitive or evil
 - They sought to devalue the peoples from whom they appropriated resources and know-how
- Western chauvinism, in its sophisticated form as articulated by Hegel, entailed the development of a Eurocentric historiography:
 - Hegel saw the West as destined to be the central agents of history

- Others were relegated to humanity's past, and excluded from its future
- Hegel asserted that India did not even have its own history
- Marx followed Hegel in negating India's historical agency and posited a Eurocentric model of historical progress
- Colonialists uprooted Indian institutions while they pillaged India's wealth. Lord Macaulay sought the Destruction of India's cultural heritage.
- The Aryanization of Europe happened in three stages:
 - Europeans were initially deeply impressed by Indian thought and literature
 - India's cultural heritage was appropriated by Europeans, who saw themselves as the true Aryans
 - The misappropriation of Indic symbols/identity led to Nazism in Germany
- Evangelism in India is a legacy of Colonialism:
 - Colonial missionaries blamed India's traditions for all its problems, and presented themselves as its saviors to harvest souls
 - Conversion was at the expense of advancing India's own cultural strength, and this exacerbated the colonial dependency
- Scholars' ideologies are played out through young students as pawns:
 - A given Scholar is committed to some personal ideology, and wants to reform or fix India accordingly. Educating kids becomes a vehicle.
 - But American kids are NOT: (a) India's social reformers, (b) working for the State Department, or (c) proselytizers.
 - Hence, playing out one's own agenda through impressionable minds is an irresponsible trap many scholars fall into. The classroom is the wrong place to prosecute India.
- South Asianization during the Cold War led to subverting India:
 - Cold War area studies were designed to supply the Government with expertise on *dealing with* the non-western world.
 - South Asianists were nurtured in a Cold War ideology that has not been removed. India's position has been compromised.
 - The South Asian label reduced the culture, history, and identity to a mere geography, in which India is seen as one of eight nations.

These processes have contributed to the negation of India. Negatives are stereotyped and positives are ignored and appropriated, in a vicious cycle.

III. Restoring India's Historical Agency

KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED WITH EDUCATORS:

De-negating India requires two steps. Only then can the potential contributions of India to the present day world come to light:

- Analysis of the true historical causes of India's problems
- An open-minded and respectful engagement with Indic traditions

A. Ancient and Classical India

- The colonialist historiography is the invasion theory of Indian history

- Indian history portrayed as merely a record of invasions
 - The Aryan Invasion : A Case of Misinterpretation
 - Alexander and the Invasion that wasn't
 - The Chimera of Greek influence
 - The Hun Invasion
 - The Turkish Invasion
 - The British Invasion
- Indian historical agency is thereby denied, as all positive aspects are deemed to be imported by invaders into India.
- The contributions and original ideas of ancient India are often ignored
 - The achievements of Indus-Sarasvati Civilization
 - Early domestication of plants and animals
 - Advanced metal work
 - Advanced city planning and sanitation
 - Standardization of weights and measures
 - Great skill in navigation and extensive trading networks
- The Commonly Ignored Periods of India's Greatness
 - The Mauryan Dynasty's contributions were many
 - Advanced social ethics
 - Served as a center of civilizing ideas when the rest of Eurasia was immersed in barbarism.
 - The Gupta Dynasty contributions enriched all of Eurasia
 - World class classical literature (plays, poetry) and folk literature
 - Art and architecture
 - Mathematics
 - Sciences
 - Cognitive sciences
 - The Pala Dynasty contributions were significant in the areas of art and architecture in
 - Southeast Asia
 - Tibet
 - The Chola and Vijayanagar Dynasties contributions were tremendous in Southeast Asia
 - Central players in the Indian Ocean trade
 - Served as a major dynamic link in the World Economy
 - Political influence in Southeast Asia
 - Transmission of the epics
 - Transmission of Hinduism
- Influence on Middle East and Europe:
 - Colonial scholars stressed the influence of Greece on India. There is also evidence that the influence was the other way around in
 - Art
 - Literature
 - Philosophy
 - Religion: Monasticism and Sainthood
 - Indo-Greco-Roman Economic links: Extensive trade existed, but with balance-of-trade in India's favor. Greeks desired Indian goods but had little to trade in return. Romans racked up a huge trade deficit with India, resulting in massive bullion flow to India

- Foreign Testimony: Many travelers to India during this time witnessed and reported on the wealth of pre-colonial India
 - Greek accounts
 - Chinese accounts
 - Tibetan accounts
 - Marco Polo's account
 - Accounts of the European explorers

B. The Muslim Period. (*Given the sensitive nature of this period, it should be handled by joint teams involving various religions of India, in order to be truthful and yet not allocate any blame upon present-day communities. The US schools experience of incorporating details of slavery against Blacks, genocide against Native Americans, and other negative aspects of the American past should be studied as role models for Indian historiography that would be both correct and sensitive in today's context. This should be balanced with the positive developments that came during this period.*)

- Prior to the Muslim invasions, most of the invaders or migrants into India settled and adapted to Indian civilization
- The Muslim Invasions had multiple phases.
 - The Era of Pillaging:
 - Evidence of the Arab historians
 - Evidence of Al-Biruni
 - Evidence of the Turkish historians
 - Evidence of the Indian Muslim historians
 - Evidence of the Tibetan historians
 - Negative consequences of the cultural holocaust
 - Destruction of India's educational and religious institutions
 - Mass executions and enslavement
 - Development of negative social patterns as a reaction to holocaust
 - Sati/Jauhar popularized in an effort to escape rape and slavery
 - Child marriage proliferated to protect young women from forcible induction into harems
 - The Foundation of Islamic Kingdoms in India
 - Gradual process of settling down in India
 - Shift from pillaging to governing
- Mughal Rule: Centered in India, but of Middle East culture and values
 - Looked toward Arabia and Persia in defining their identity
 - Sponsored many enhancements in Indic culture — music, dance, and art.
 - Strength of regime was also due to their adaptation to Indic cultural traditions
 - Appropriation of the Indian economy which had escaped destruction by their predecessors
 - Economic policies
 - High taxation, but inefficient tax collection
 - Tax proceeds largely spent in India

C. The Colonial Period

- Pre Renaissance Europe and India in 15th / 16th Century:
 - Europe a lesser economy, seeking Indian goods and know-how
 - Indian goods reach Europe via land routes controlled by the Mamelukes, Saffavids and Ottoman Turks
 - The Sea-Routes: Europeans seek ocean routes to India

- Portuguese circumnavigate Africa to join pre-existing sea trade across Indian Ocean, using Indian navigators
 - Columbus seeks a route to India across the Atlantic and discovers America
- Bypassing centuries of middlemen, they directly purchased Indian goods, particularly manufactured goods such as textiles
- Europe had little to trade in return, and lacked India's technical expertise
- Their solution: expropriate by force what they could not themselves produce.
- Rise of Colonialism:
 - Early missions were little more than glorified piracy justified in the name of the Church
 - Colonialism proper established as European powers raced to occupy Indian ports
 - They were aided by the weakness of the Mughals, whose reign was extremely unpopular following the destructive rule of Aurangzeb
 - Europeans seizure of key port cities and put an end to Indian Ocean free trade
 - Missionaries soon follow the trail of violence

D. British India

- British stripped away Indian wealth & know-how:
 - This was exported to England, triggering the economic boom later known as the Industrial Revolution
 - Indian Economy crippled by extremely high taxation and burdensome economic regulations designed to suppress India's economy and encourage her dependency on Europe.
 - Even the Colonial historians concur that India was enormously wealthy prior to British rule
 - Modern Indian historians have quantitatively analyzed the extent to which the British appropriated Indian wealth
- Modern European historians rewrote Indian history:
 - Negated India's cultural contributions and historical agency
 - Portrayed India as passive and static, and in need of invasions
 - Portrayed British rule as benevolent, a source of benefit for India
 - Emphasized India's differences, strangeness, irrationality, and denied its nationhood legitimacy

APPENDIX 2

PROPOSAL ON REPOSITIONING INDIA IN U.S. SCHOOLS

I. GOALS FOR TEACHING ABOUT INDIA IN U.S. SCHOOLS

Given the overload demanded by today's educational needs, one must ask why bother teaching about India at all? How would teaching India improve the life of American society in the next generation? Before any curriculum can be planned or books written, there needs to be a clear policy on why India is to be taught in the first place. Without such a standard, the portrayal is left to the discretion and personal biases of individual scholars who write the books. Today, in most states, there is no formal policy on education about India.

Below is our proposed policy on what the objectives of such an education should be.

A. TO PROMOTE MULTICULTURALISM IN USA:

Indians are very much part of the American fabric, and the portrayal impacts American life right here at home.

- a. In Schools: Enhance understanding and respect between Indian American and other kids.
- b. In Work Places: Remove cultural barriers to foster teamwork with Indian Americans as co-workers and bosses.
- c. In Neighborhoods: Promote greater harmony — pre-empt the mentality that results in dot-buster phenomena.

B. TO PREPARE AMERICAN KIDS FOR GLOBALIZATION:

Make them ready for careers in which they would have to deal with India professionally as: supplier, customer, partner, and competitor.

C. TO UNDERSTAND INDIA'S ROLE IN WORLD HISTORY:

Through export of Buddhism, India was the mother country for much of Asia's languages, cultures, science, and religion. The quest for sea routes to India's export products led to the discoveries of America and of the new sea routes to Asia. As the supplier of cash, manufacturing technology and as market for finished goods, colonized India made Britain's Industrial Revolution financially viable.

D. TO LEARN FROM INDIA:

Gandhi, yoga, meditation, vegetarianism, holistic medicine, family values, a long history of pluralism, fashions and culture — these are a few of the contributions of India that have relevance to Americans.

E. TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF INDIAN AMERICANS:

Indian American students should not (but often do) feel alienated, embarrassed, or insulted by the portrayal of their culture in class. Many would rather have nothing taught about India. Many distance themselves from Indian identity to escape embarrassment.

THE GOALS SHOULD NOT BE:

- Belittling Indian Americans' culture, even unintentionally.
- Playing out a given educator's personal ideology through the kids' lives.
- Prosecuting India to cure it or reform it of its evils — this is the wrong place for it.
- Negating India's rich cultural heritage and contributions.
- Training future proselytizers to convert Hindus.

EXAMPLES OF THEMES TO ADD:

- + India's geo-political importance in the world.
- + Gandhi's impact on American civil rights
- + Indian Americans' place in America today
- + Yoga/meditation as American adoptions
- + Indian Science/Technology and its contributions to the world
- + Pre-colonial India's economy and position in world trade, and the devastating effects of colonialism.
- + Indian art, music, culture and its growing popularity in the world
- + Influence of India on Western and Asian literature, language, linguistics.
- + India's thriving democracy as a role model for developing nations.
- + Progress made by independent India on so many fronts.
- + Where permissible: Core spiritual or religious ideas of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, using perspectives from within the traditions and NOT a caricature of them.

EXAMPLES OF THEMES TO REMOVE:

- Aryan migration theory: Sanskrit, Vedas, most good things are imported.
- Colonial gifts to India.
- Poverty as inherent essence of India since time immemorial.
- Caste abuses and women issues depicted as Hindu pathology.
- Indian = backward. Western = advanced.
- India = Pakistan.
- Weird, exotic, chaotic place, mainly a nuisance to be contained.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CALL TO ACTION

- Appoint a task force to review curricula on India, and lack thereof.
- Include competent scholars from within the traditions of India: de-colonialize India's portrayal.
- Revise teaching materials and re-train teachers so as to make the state a national role model for an objective and relevant education, in accordance with the Goals in Section I.

¹ See The Axis of Neocolonialism, at: <http://www.sulekha.com/column.asp?cid=218625>

² While it is commonly called the first renaissance, there had already been several prior renaissances in India, China, Tibet and other societies.

³ For example: Haney, William S., *Literary theory and Sanskrit poetics : language, consciousness, and meaning*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press. 1993. Also: Bimal Kishan Matilal, *The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language*. Oxford India. 2001.

⁴ When expressed as a percentage of population, instances of women's abuse, homicides, drug addiction, and other social indicators are far worse both in USA and in the poor Christian countries such as El Salvador, Mexico, and Philippines, than they are in India.

⁵ This is the official body of the American Academy of Religions that focuses on Indic Traditions and has around 300 members representing the faculty and researchers of these traditions.

⁶ For instance, Aditya Adharkar, a recent PhD from Wendy Doniger, after attending a recent Vedic conference, criticized it harshly on the basis that it focused on Vedas and not on minority religions of India (as if he had failed to read the title of the conference, which was specifically about Vedas), and that it focused on Indic Contributions (again failing to read the subtitle which was precisely, Indic Contributions for this year's event). He made sweeping generalizations about ALL talks, without having

attending the majority of them. His final warning gave his agenda away: he cautioned against such forums becoming a threat to RISA. These tenure seekers must appease the powers to be, and can hardly be considered to be practicing insiders. On the other hand, their value to the Academy is largely based on grooming them as the next generation of sepoys, who, by definition, must be accepted as insiders.

⁷ For instance, Wendy Doniger, regarded as the Goddess of Hinduism Studies in Western academic circles, has bypassed Stage 3, and moved directly to Stage 4. However, it is plausible that later in her life, she might rediscover all the positive qualities of Hinduism as being in her native Judaism. Meanwhile, she specializes in the depiction of Hinduism from the two lowest chakras — the anal and genital chakras, respectively. Qualities of Hinduism linked with higher chakras seem uninteresting to her.

⁸ My Sulekha column, titled, The Axis of Neocolonialism, describes this in detail:

<http://www.sulekha.com/column.asp?cid=218625>

⁹ Once they make this U-Turn back, they often explain their appropriations using theories of archetypes, namely, that all ideas were always present within all cultures, anyway. However, the uniqueness claims of Western superiority of rationality, science, morality, etc., are never explained away in this manner.

¹⁰ For instance, Jung went to stage 2 and 3. But he was open about his debt to India. After him, his successors, i.e. present Jungians, erased these Indic sources and have sometimes denigrated the Indic sources as inferior in various ways. T. S. Eliot was very Hindu for a period when he composed his most famous poems, including *The Wasteland*. But today, this Indic influence is never mentioned in literature courses on Eliot.

¹¹ This is why the term stealth Eurocentrism might be appropriate in some instances.

¹² Based on advice from African American and Muslim scholars who have faced similar situations, if Indian students sitting in class were to protest, the academic establishment would wake up and respond with corrective action. But to pre-empt this, there are many Indian American faculty members (as sepoys) in various colleges, who were raised in JNU-like Marxist Seminaries or who are Dalit activists. These Indians have established a stranglehold, and perform a powerful role to self-alienate Indian American students entering college.

¹³ See my two part essays titled, A Business Model of Religion posted at:

<http://www.sulekha.com/column.asp?cid=160817> and <http://www.sulekha.com/column.asp?cid=193236>

¹⁴ Even though Jung himself appropriated many of his key concepts from yoga and Hinduism.